



Department of Justice High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project *New Orleans, Louisiana*

Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected using criteria that included perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, New Orleans metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Partnering Agencies

Partnership among New Orleans area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- Causeway Police
- City of New Orleans
- Civil Air Patrol
- Crescent City Connection Police Department
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Jefferson Parish
- Louisiana Department of Public Safety
- Louisiana National Guard
- New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD)
- New Orleans International Airport Fire Department
- Port of New Orleans Harbor Police
- St. Bernard Parish
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- U.S. Marshals Service
- U.S. Secret Service

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the New Orleans metropolitan area through the implementation of four interoperability solutions. The solutions introduce a new wide-area interoperability resource and also support the use of existing, disparate interoperability and communications systems by extending coverage, capacity, and availability to more public safety agencies. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project’s interoperability goals, stakeholders were able to foster a working relationship among local, state, and federal agencies to resolve interoperability objectives for the area.

The first solution implemented a federal interoperability channel to support interagency communications during emergency response. DOJ installed a 350-watt conventional narrowband repeater in April, 2006, with 13 voted receivers strategically located to provide on-street and mobile coverage throughout the New Orleans metropolitan area. Hosted and maintained by the FBI, the new very high frequency (VHF) interoperability channel provides for wide-area interagency communications. While the priority use is

for communications among command and control personnel during emergency responses, the channel will also be used for daily operations that involve interagency communications.

To expand existing interconnection capabilities and to extend connectivity to the new federal interoperability channel, two audio switches were installed at the New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD) Rosedale Communications Center (RCC) to complement two existing audio switches. The ACU-1000’s were outfitted with VHF, ultra high frequency (UHF), and 800 megahertz (MHz) control stations to link disparate, out-of-band radio systems and the federal interoperability channel. Audio switch operators can patch the federal interoperability channel to local, state, and federal radio systems, thereby providing region-wide interoperability among those agencies during emergency response. Two new microwave links were installed in July, 2006, from RCC to USCG New Orleans and RCC to Orleans Parish Communications District to provide consistent connectivity. Five new 700/800 radios are scheduled to be installed at the RCC in August, 2006, to provide connectivity to the Region 1 radio system.

To support interoperable communications at an incident scene, the third solution is to provide a mobile audio switch that will be installed in a New Orleans Maritime Interoperability Committee (NOMIC) agency supplied vehicle. This solution and other mobile solutions are currently under study by NOMIC, and will be implemented in the fall of 2006.

DOJ purchased eighteen radios for the City of New Orleans to be connected to their new Network First switch that is being installed in summer, 2006. DOJ also purchased a new control station for USCG New Orleans to provide an additional link into the federal interoperability channel and the NOMIC ACU-1000 and Network First switches.

To coordinate common operating procedures for the new interoperability solutions, DOJ worked with NOMIC to identify federal participants to join the local and state agency members. This collaborative effort resulted in the development of standard operating procedures to address rules of use for operating on the federal interoperability channel, requesting a patch on the fixed audio switches, and deploying mobile resources. Stakeholders continue to meet regularly to update documentation and to discuss interoperability efforts in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

Contact Information

Additional information can be provided by the following —

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